

Commodity Highlight: Cantaloup

What is referred to as cantaloup in the U.S. is actually muskmelon (*Cucumis melo*, var. *reticulatus*). True cantaloupes (var. *cantaloupensis*), common in Europe, lack the characteristic netted rind of the muskmelon and are not grown commercially in the United States. Cantaloup is thought to have originated in Persia and West Africa and came to America with the colonists.

With a 6-percent share of a 47-billion-pound world market, the United States ranks third in the production of cantaloup and miscellaneous melons, behind China (40 percent) and Turkey (9 percent). U.S. shipments from domestic sources run May through December, with volume peaking in early summer.

The U.S. farm value of cantaloup averaged \$401 million during 2000-02. California is the Nation's top producer of cantaloupes, accounting for 60 percent of the crop during 2000-02, followed by Arizona (18 percent), and Texas (11 percent). About 58 percent of California's cantaloupes are grown in Fresno County, with Imperial County a distant second at 17 percent.

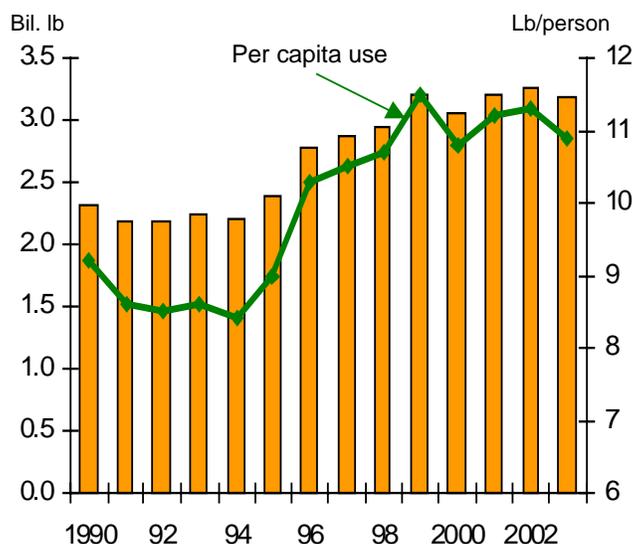
Cantaloup has been gaining in popularity among U.S. consumers for many years. Between 1990-92 and 2000-02, per capita consumption of cantaloup rose 27 percent. Since 1980-82, consumption has risen 70 percent. Per capita consumption of this popular breakfast and dessert melon increased slightly from a year earlier to 11.3 pounds in 2002.

Consumption has been increasing for a number of reasons, including:

- o emergence of year-round demand and availability;
- o increasing health consciousness among consumers;
- o strong economic growth, and;
- o adoption of improved varieties.

Nearly half of the gain in U.S. cantaloup consumption since 1990-02 can be attributed to a doubling of imports. As consumers have integrated more produce into their diets, demand has risen for year-round supplies. It is now common to find cantaloup in

Figure 10
U.S. cantaloup: Consumption *



* All uses. Source: ERS, USDA.

supermarkets and at salad bars throughout the year. From December to April, cantaloup availability depends almost entirely on imports. Imports accounted for 34 percent of year-round U.S. consumption in 2002, up from 24 percent during 1990-92 and 11 percent during 1980-82. World-wide, less than a 10th of consumption is derived from imports.

Proximity to low-cost producers in Mexico and Central America, combined with strengthening off-season domestic demand has made the United States the world's leading importer, with one-third of global imports. U.S. imports were valued at \$271 million in 2002.

Exports rose 69 percent over the past decade and now absorb 5 percent of the U.S. cantaloup supply--up from 4 percent during 1990-92. Canada takes 90 percent of U.S. exports, with Japan a distant second at 5 percent.

Table 16--U.S. cantaloup: Supply, utilization, and price

Year	Supply			Utilization			Season-average price		
	Production 1/	Imports 2/	Total	Exports 2/	Domestic	Per capita use	Current dollars 1/	Constant dollars 3/	
	-- Million pounds --						Pounds	-- \$/cwt --	
1980	1,224.2	169.9	1,394.1	62.7	1,331.4	5.84	13.60	23.70	
1990	1,856.7	530.3	2,387.0	78.8	2,308.2	9.23	14.65	16.93	
1998	2,149.2	938.6	3,087.8	144.0	2,943.8	10.66	17.80	17.25	
1999	2,257.7	1,108.1	3,365.8	153.9	3,211.9	11.50	17.20	16.43	
2000	2,096.5	1,119.2	3,215.7	155.5	3,060.2	10.83	17.50	16.37	
2001	2,271.8	1,070.1	3,341.9	146.0	3,195.9	11.19	19.00	17.36	
2002	2,304.6	1,108.6	3,413.2	156.1	3,257.1	11.29	17.60	15.90	
2003 f	2,335.0	1,005.0	3,340.0	155.0	3,185.0	10.92	--	--	

-- = Not available. f = ERS forecast. 1/ Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA. Production data were adjusted by ERS for 1970-81 to account for States not included in NASS estimates. 2/ Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce. From 1978-89, exports adjusted by ERS using Canadian import data. 3/ Constant-dollar prices calculated using GDP deflator, 1996=100.